

Affinity Groups:

INFORMATION

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Affinity Groups: Spanish Revolution



Spanish anarchist militiaman

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AFFINITY Groups are an incredibly effective, efficient and personally empowering way to organize a direct action. These small autonomous groups of 5-20 people have been adopted by many movements that employ mass direct action. Affinity Groups, a traditional anarchist form of organization, by their nature challenge top-down organization and decision-making.

The idea of large scale affinity group-based organization was planted in the U.S. on April 30, 1977 when 2,500 people, organized into Affinity Groups, occupied the Seabrook, New Hampshire, nuclear power plant. This model was adopted by the growing anti-nuclear power and disarmament movements. More recently it has been used by the anti-intervention, lesbian/gay liberation, anti-apartheid and earth first movements.

The Spanish Anarchist movement, which pioneered Affinity Groups based organization, pro-

vides an exhilarating example of a movement, and the actual possibility of a society, based on decentralized organization, direct democracy and the principles behind them.

Small circles of good friends, called "tertulias" — who might meet at favorite cafés to discuss ideas and plan actions — were a Latin tradition. In 1888, a period of intense class conflict in Europe and of local insurrections and struggles in Spain, the Anarchist Organization of the Spanish Region made this traditional form (tertulias) the basis of its organization. Decades later, the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) also adopted the tertulia as the basic element of its more formal organization, and

called them "grupos de afinidad" (affinity groups). Begun in 1927, the FAI at times included an estimated 39,000 members, all of whom were also influential members of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT (National Workers Confederation). The CNT, Spain's strongest labor federation, claimed over one million members.

Wherever several FAI Affinity Groups existed they formed a local federation. Local federations were coordinated by committees made up of one mandated delegate from each Affinity Group. Local committees organized assemblies of Affinity Groups. Mandated delegates were sent from local federations to district committees and in turn to regional committees and finally to the Peninsular Committee. *Tierra y Libertad* and numerous smaller newspapers helped to facilitate communication. Affinity Groups remained autonomous as they carried out education, organized and supported local struggles. The intimacy of the groups made police infiltration difficult.

In July, 1936, Francisco Franco, with a group of fascist generals, launched a military revolt to take power from Spain's Republican Government. Spanish workers and peasants, armed themselves and defeated the military through much of the country, particularly in anarchist strongholds. Millions of Spaniards took action, not to revive the treacherous Republican Government but to restructure society along revolutionary lines. The sweeping social revolution that followed was the culmination of 60 years of anarchist organizing, education and agitation.

Factories, transportation, telephones and even wholesale and retail stores were taken over and run collectively. Assemblies of workers in each workplace made decisions and delegated committees to carry out administrative and other tasks. An estimated 1,200-1,800 self-managed workers' collectives were formed. Over 3 million people were involved. Workers' self-management effectively replaced the remnants of government and private institutions, providing the everyday necessities of life — food, clothing, shelter and public services.

In rural areas 7-8 million people were involved directly or indirectly in the collectivization of more than half the land not controlled by Franco's forces. Peasants and land laborers established free communal systems of production and distribution. They also created a decision-making process based on popular assemblies. These decentralized collectives continued for over two years under the strain of civil war until Franco's military victory in 1939.

The U.S. in 1988 is clearly different from Spain in 1936. But the growing use of Affinity Group organization, consensus decision making and mass direct action—at the Pentagon, the Nevada Test Site, the FDA and in communities across the country, is encouraging. The anarchist principles that informed the development of these methods in revolutionary Spain are a living body of ideas that are as urgent in North America today as they were in Spain 50 years ago. ●

Autonomous Base Nucleus

Mass structures, autonomous base nuclei are the element linking the specific informal anarchist organisation to social struggles.

The autonomous base nucleus is not an entirely new form of struggle. Attempts have been made to develop these structures in Italy over the past ten years. The most notable of these was the Autonomous Movement of the Turin Railway Workers(1), and the Self-managed Leagues against the cruise missile base in Comiso(2).

We believe the revolutionary struggle is without doubt a mass struggle. We therefore see the need to build structures capable of organising as many groups of exploited as possible.

We have always considered the syndicalist perspective critically both because of its limitations as an instrument, and because of its tragic historical involution that no anarchist lick of paint can cover up. So we reached the hypothesis of building autonomous base nuclei lacking the characteristics of mini-syndicalist structures, having other aims and organisational relations.

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Through these structures an attempt has been made to link the specific anarchist movement to social struggles. A considerable barrier of reticence and incomprehension has been met among comrades and this has been an obstacle in realising this organisational method. It is in moments of action that differences emerge among comrades who all agree in principle with anarchist propaganda, the struggle against the State, self-management and direct action. When we move into an organisational phase, however, we must

develop a project that is in touch with the present level of the clash between classes.

We believe that due to profound social transformation it is unthinkable for one single structure to try to contain all social and economic struggle within it. In any case, why should the exploited have to enter and become part of a specific anarchist organisation in order to carry out their struggle?

A radical change in the way society—exploitation—is being run can only be achieved by revolution. That is why we are trying to intervene with an insurrectional project. Struggles of tomorrow will only have a positive outcome if the relationship between informal specific anarchist structure and the mass structure of autonomous base nuclei is clarified and put into effect.

The main aim of the nucleus is not to abolish the State or capital which are practicably unattackable so long as they remain a general concept. The objective of the nucleus is to fight and attack *this* State and *this* Capital in their smaller and more attainable structures, having recourse to an insurrectional method.

The autonomous base groups are mass structures and constitute the point of encounter between the informal anarchist organisation and social struggles.

The organisation within the nucleus distinguishes itself by the following characteristics:

- a) autonomy from any political, trade union or syndical force;
- b) permanent conflictuality (a constant and effective struggle towards the aims that are decided upon, not sporadic occasional interventions);
- c) attack (the refusal of compromise, mediation or accommodation that questions the attack on the chosen objective).

As far as aims are concerned, these are decided upon and realised through attacks upon the repressive, military and

productive structures, etc. The importance of permanent conflictuality and attack is fundamental.

These attacks are organised by the nuclei in collaboration with specific anarchist structures which provide practical and theoretical support, developing the search for the means required for the ac-

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tion, pointing out the structures and individuals responsible for repression, and offering a minimum of defence against attempts at political or ideological recuperation by power or against repression pure and simple.

At first sight the relationship between specific anarchist organisation and autonomous base nucleus might seem contradictory. The specific structure follows an insurrectional perspective, while the base nuclei seem to be in quite another dimension, that of intermediate struggle. But this struggle only remains such at the beginning. If the analysis on which the project is based coincides with the interests of the exploited in the situation in which they find themselves, then an insurrectional outcome to the struggle is possible. Of course this outcome is not certain. That cannot be guaranteed by anyone.

This method has been accused of being incomplete and of not taking into account the fact that an attack against one or more structures always ends up increasing repression. Comrades can reflect on these accusations. We think it is never possible to see the outcome of a struggle in advance. Even a limited struggle can have the most unexpected consequences. And in any case, the passage from the various insurrections—limited and circumscribed—to revolution can never be guaranteed in advance by any procedure. We go forward by trial and error, and say to whoever has a better method—carry on.

The informal Organisation

The informal anarchist organisation has nothing to do with programmes, platforms or flags but is based on a common affinity between comrades whose objective is to intervene in struggles in an insurrectional direction. In that way it is possible to be present in and heighten the class struggle.

Anarchist groups and individuals are often spread over the territory with little contact between them and few ideas on methods and possibilities of intervention in social reality.

There is a certain presence in some areas, especially of a syndicalist nature. In others there is action against nuclear installations. The widest area of intervention is that of counter-information and propaganda.

An anarchist movement that is really



active and incisive needs two main factors: an agile and effective instrument and an objective that is sufficiently clear in perspective.

We think the informal organisation and insurrection are the concrete possibilities that present themselves at the present time.

It has already been said that the organisation of synthesis, based on the congress and political programme, is a structure that because of its internal characteristics and the mechanisms that support it, cannot be a valid instrument for comrades wanting to move in an insurrectional perspective. Political pro-



grammes and platforms are organisational models which, from an insurrectional point of view, have seen their day.

One thing that is indispensable in the informal anarchist organisation is reciprocal knowledge between members. This and affinity among comrades is what characterises the informal form of organisation.

We have all reached anarchist positions through time, maturing certain convictions concerning social problems. We also have some idea of how to intervene in social reality and the relative strategic choices to be made. Well, let us go into these problems, ascertain whether we agree on certain points, show each other how we think.

Certainly, it is not easy. It is nevertheless indispensable to confront one another. Without this no kind of informal structure or informal relationship is possible.

The informal proposal does not mean one has to agree on every single problem that arises. Affinity does not possess a uniform level of intensity. Knowledge of



another is an infinite process that reaches greater or lesser depth according to the circumstances and the objectives one is trying to reach.

The basic project of an informal anarchist organisation has, in our opinion, the objective of intervening in struggles in an insurrectional logic. This organisation does not give one area privilege over another, does not have a stable centrality. It singles out an objective which at a given moment presents a particularly acute area of social conflict and works in a perspective of insurrection.

The debate is open on this point.

Criticisms that insurrection is not a valid proposal today, sometimes confuse insurrection with the old "propaganda by the deed". On the contrary we think that the insurrectional project gives itself the aim of attacking power in each one of its manifestations by the stimulation of the anarchist informal organisation, but



always with mass participation, showing in deed the possibility and validity of such attacks.

In that way it is possible to be present in the class struggle and heighten the level of it.

We see the informal organisation therefore as a number of comrades linked by a common affinity. The wider the range of problems these comrades face as a whole, the greater their affinity will be. It follows that the real organisation, the effective capacity to act together, ie knowing where to find each other, the study and analysis of problems together, and the passing to action, all takes place in relation to the affinity reached and has nothing to do with programmes, platforms, flags or more or less camouflaged parties. The informal anarchist organisation



tion is therefore a specific organisation which gathers around a common affinity.

Undoubtedly it will tend towards a growth in numbers, but this is not the main aim of activity. As the organism born in this way develops it will give itself common means of intervention. First of all an instrument of debate necessary for analytical examination, such as a paper or review, capable of supplying indications on a wide range of problems and of becoming a point of reference for continually verifying affinity or divergence of opinion between groups and individual comrades.

Secondly these specific groups can also form base structures involving the exploited in specific areas of struggle, not as an element of growth in the speci-



fic movement. In this optic it becomes dispersive to give life to a permanent structure to confront specific problems.

The base structures have a single objective. When this objective has been reached, or the attempt fails, the structure either widens into a situation of generalised insurrection, or dismantles as the case may be.

It should be stressed here that although the element holding the informal organisation together is undoubtedly affinity, its propulsive element is always action. If it limits itself to the first alone, all relationships will become arid in the bizantine perfectionism of whoever has nothing better to do than try to hide one's will to do nothing.

The problems that have been touched on here deserve more going into and we invite all comrades to take part in a discussion of them.

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Repression against the Anarchist Movement in Greece

The Greek Home Minister has unleashed a vast terroristic operation against the anarchist movement following a series of proletarian attacks in Athens protesting against police brutality.

The Minister has made statements to the effect that clandestine armed groups operating in Greece must be dismantled. This is aimed at creating a climate of social tension to justify the State's repressive projects against the revolutionary movement.

To this avail the State has used the bourgeois press to manipulate public opinion, circulating false news criminalising the anarchist movement and, more specifically, the newly-formed Greek Anarchist Union.

This repressive scenario consists in trying to present the Anarchist Union—formed during the first Pan-Hellenic Anarchist Conference held in Athens in May this year—as a decision-making and operational centre for all the autonomous actions of proletarian attack against repression recently carried out in Greece.

The Greek anarchist movement is mobilising in protest against this repressive manipulation with actions of counter-information at public level.

But the arrest of two anarchist comrades, Clearchos Shimeos and Christoforos Marinos in a stolen car in Athens, and the killing of comrade Michalis Prekas by the police, have supplied the forces of repression with a further alibi for intensifying their attack against the movement. Two more comrades, Evangelia Voghiatei and Gerasimos Boukouvalas, have now been arrested, the latter belonging to the Greek Anarchist Union.

The Greek anarchist movement is now organising to defend its arrested militants politically. They are accused of belonging to an armed group, theft and illegal possession of firearms. These accusations are based exclusively on the State's need to justify and further intensify its preceeding repressive scenario.

The defence of the comrades now being organised by the Greek anarchist movement is not based on the guilty/innocent logic, but supports the revolutionary integrity and identity of the arrested comrades, independently of the accusations made by the repressive organs of the State.



We ask for the active solidarity of the whole international anarchist movement in our struggle against the State and capitalist domination and exploitation which is striking us particularly at this time.

Some comrades of the Greek Anarchist Union

The Affinity Group

Contrary to what is often believed, affinity between comrades does not depend on sympathy or sentiment. To have affinity means to have knowledge of the other, to know how they think on social issues and how they think they can intervene in the social clash. This deepening of knowledge between comrades is an aspect that is often neglected, impeding effective action.

One of the most difficult problems anarchists have had to face throughout their history is what form of organisation to adopt in the struggle.

At the two ends of the spectrum we find on the one hand the individualists who refuse any kind of stable relationship; on the other those who support a permanent organisation which acts on a programme established at the moment of its constitution.

One of the reasons for this deficiency is in our opinion lack of perspective.

Clearly no one has a sure recipe that contains no defects: we can however point out the limitations we see in certain kinds of organisation, and indicate possible alternatives.

One of these is known as "affinity groups".

The term requires an explanation.

finite process which can stop at any level according to the circumstances and objectives one wants to reach together. One could therefore have an affinity for doing some things and not others. It becomes obvious that when one speaks of knowledge that does not mean it is necessary to discuss one's personal problems, although these can become important when they interfere with the process of deepening knowledge of one another.

In this sense having knowledge of the other does not necessarily mean having an intimate relationship. What it is necessary to know is how the comrade thinks concerning the social problems which the class struggle confronts him with, how he thinks he can intervene, what methods he thinks should be used in given situations, etc.

The first step in the deepening of knowledge between comrades is discussion. It is preferable to have a clarifying premiss, such as something written, so the various problems can be gone into well.

Once the essentials are clarified the affinity group or groups are practically formed. The deepening of knowledge between comrades continues in relation to their action as a group and the latter's encounter with reality as a whole. While this process is taking place their knowledge often widens and strong bonds between comrades often emerge. This however is a consequence of the affinity, not its primal aim.

It often happens that comrades go about things the other way round, beginning some kind of activity and only proceeding to the necessary clarifications later, without ever having assessed the level of affinity required to do anything together. Things are left to chance, as though some kind of clarity were automatically to emerge from the group simply by its formation. Of course this does not happen: the group either stagnates because there is no clear road for it to take, or it follows the tendency of the comrade or comrades who have the clearest ideas as to what they want to do while others allow themselves to be pulled along, often with little enthusiasm or real engagement.

The affinity group on the other hand finds it has great potential and is immediately addressed towards action, basing itself not on the quantity of its adherents, but on the qualitative strength of a number of individuals working together in a projectuality that they develop together as they go along. From being a specific structure of the anarchist movement and the whole arc of activity that this presents—propaganda, direct action, perhaps producing a paper, working within an informal organisation—it can also look outwards to forming a base nucleus or some other mass structure and thus intervene more effectively in the social clash.



Both of the forms sketched out here have characteristics that are criticisable from an insurrectional point of view.

In fact, when individualists single out and strike the class enemy they are sometimes far ahead of the most combative of the class components of the time, and their action is not understood. On the contrary, those who support the need for a permanent organisation often wait until there is already a considerable number of exploited indicating how and when to strike the class enemy. The former carry out actions that turn out to be too far ahead of the level of the struggle, the latter too far behind.

Affinity is often confused with sentiment. Although not distinctly separate, the two terms should not be considered synonymous. There could be comrades with whom we consider we have an affinity, but whom we do not find sympathetic and vice versa.

Basically, to have an affinity with a comrade means to know them, to have deepened one's knowledge of them. As that knowledge grows, the affinity can increase to the point of making an action together possible; but it can also diminish to the point of making it practically impossible.

Knowledge of another is an in-

TIPS FOR DENTAL STUDENTS

NORTH AMERICA HAS RECENTLY experienced a renewed militancy in demonstrations brought about by people tired of the repetitious nature of heavily policed liberal marches. In Toronto, this attitude has built up over a while, and started to show its face at a self-directed (as opposed to leftist-directed) action at the US consulate when troops were sent to Honduras; carried through in the anti-Economic Summit actions, and again at an anarchist demonstration against the bombing of the Iranian airbus July 4. All have been marked by their operation outside any group's control and their willingness to go beyond legal means and parameters to fight back.

The choice to take demonstrations outside of their standard role as opposition politics is important in seeing action evolve into a revolutionary consciousness. It's time that demonstrations become a place to test and show our collective strength, learn tactics and solidarity, and a place to unite in attacking our common enemies.

Demonstrations however, must always be a *small* part of a broader movement which confronts hierarchy on an everyday basis. In other words, it's not our desire to clash with police: the purpose and goals of our actions must be clear, and we should work towards them in our actions, only using

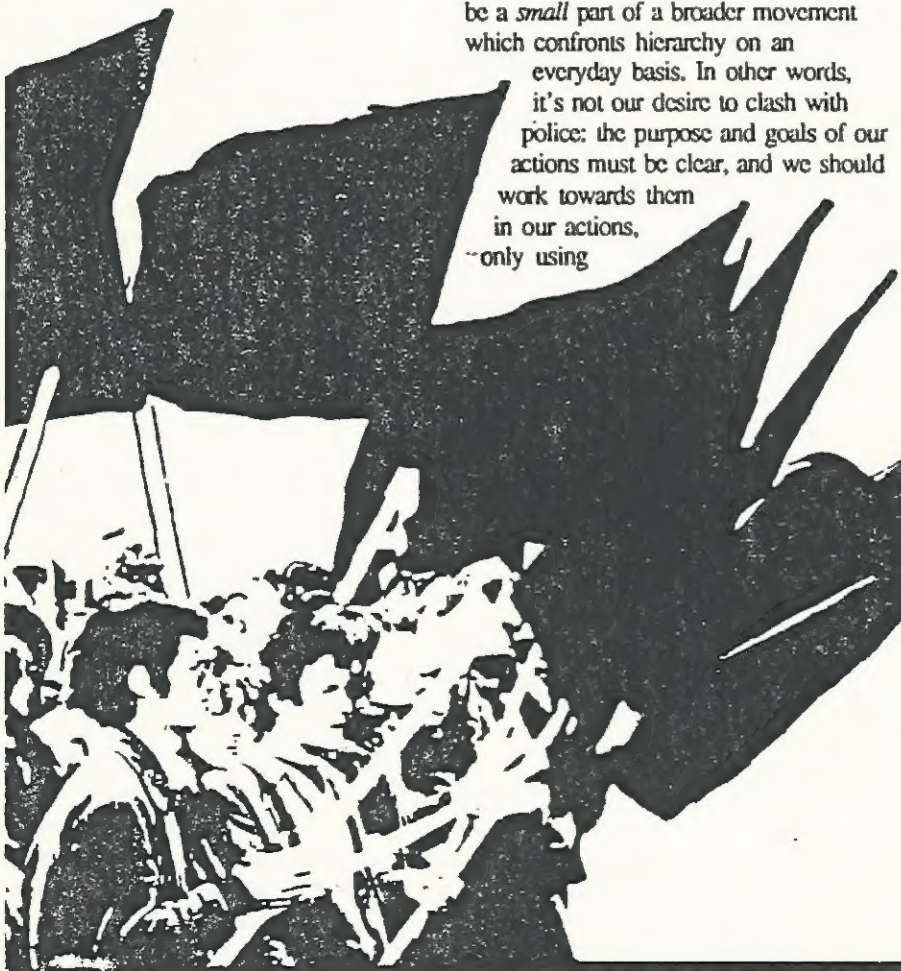
force as is necessary for self-defense and the accomplishment of these goals. An action, then, is not good merely because a fight with police occurs, it's good if it manages to effect one or more of its goals. Most often an action is best if no police interference happens at all — simply "breaking the law" is *not* a sure sign of "radicalism".

To make such actions more *effective* and easier, they should be done with none or a minimum of arrests, and with clear targets and actions. By preparing ourselves ahead of time for situations and by operating in affinity groups we may be able to increase the effectiveness of actions dramatically.

Affinity Groups

It is useful to organize together with people around you ahead of time; people you trust on some level and with whom you have common understandings (about how to act/react in this situation etc. ie affinity). Discussing amongst ourselves particular actions and situations and our responses can build an important and practical solidarity between us which will enable us to act *together* in an action. This makes it more likely that we will feel confident in our actions because we will be aware of the existence of physical and emotional support for our actions. For instance, a group might discuss the possibility of one of them being arrested. An agreement could be made ahead of time to intervene in that situation and rescue them by force, or a decision to run might be made ... but in the event that one person is picked off, that person would know what to expect from their friends and would prepare for that action (ie get ready to run like hell). It also enables, in that situation, one person to step ahead and initiate an action knowing that their friends will back them up, rather than being unsure and hesitant.

In the "affinity group" particular actions initiated by that group might also be discussed, such as an act of sabotage or simply a piece of street theatre. With a bunch of affinity groups working together in one larger group of people, small actions can be put into effect which liven up and redirect the energy of a demonstration.



The affinity group agreed upon ahead of time can look out for each other in somewhat of a "buddy system" which keeps them together and minimizes arrests.

Above all the message is to go into any action prepared and having given it some thought: first of all as to its purpose (and how to achieve that end), and secondly as to your own involvement in it. Leftists and other protest bureaucrats only want *numbers* of people to fill the ranks, listen to the speeches and look good on TV. It's up to us to make our presence at any action count, to become active individuals and move towards actions directed "from below", not "from above" as bureaucrats would have it.

Preparation

Always bring a handkerchief or some other kind of disguise to a demo to hide yourself from police cameras if necessary. It's not always the best idea to mask up alone, as this might single you out for arrest, but people need to start wearing masks at demos, if only to make it a more viable collective tactic. Bring an extra scarf for a friend.

Never bring address books, other info or drugs to an action. It's usually best not to have anything more than what you definitely need on you as it's a drag to carry it all and in the event of an arrest you don't want the cops to get it. One thing that is good to bring is a change of shirt or head gear, glasses, etc. Something which changes your appearance enough to enable you to disappear in a crowd as cops will usually follow the "yellow shirt" or the "long, curly hair" in a pursuit situation.

Know the area if possible, what's there in terms of corporate targets, and what kind of dangers there are, and of course escape routes.

DO bring things which can be of use such as pen and paper and someone might want to bring a camera (though be aware this makes you a target for arrest or beatings, and if you are arrested you probably won't get it back). Use common sense. Bring gloves if it looks like there might be sabotage action. Judge the situation ahead of time and know what will be needed and what will just get you in further shit if found on

your person (for instance a slingshot can be both a great tool and a real problem if you're busted with it on you). Wipe stuff that's incriminating off with rubbing alcohol or something to get rid of fingerprints ahead of time, in case you have to chuck it along the way.

On the action

Assuming that you've brought a pen and paper, write down the names of the arrested persons, and their phone numbers. Also write the words spoken by the police during the arrest, the number of the car or wagon they are put



into, badge numbers and/or descriptions of police involved in the arrest.

Take down information before the shit hits the fan. You must anticipate, because once the action starts you will not necessarily have time to get enough down.

The camera is a powerful weapon. At rallies, demonstrations etc., they are essential. The more the better. But you must arrange for them to be there. You cannot rely on someone showing up with one. And you certainly can not count on someone with the right consciousness about these matters turning up with a camera.

Use them to:

- ★ Provide some deterrence against police brutality. The sound of shutters clicking in those tense moments sometimes can prevent the police from doing things they would otherwise do.
- ★ Take pictures of the license plates that you want to record.
- ★ Take pictures of police, both plain clothes and uniformed. Later witnesses may want to identify the filth who did the dirty deed.

Bring enough film!

Tape recorders: It may be useful to record comments made by the police, a factory owner, scab, or provocateur or perhaps participants in your own demonstration, rally or march. A recording device that is visible may have

the same deterrent effect that the presence of cameras often has.

Stick together: solidarity is strength. Running is fine, just make sure to keep the crowd together so the cops can't split us up. Often the filth will use "snatch squads" to wade into a crowd and grab someone they have singled out as a "leader" or trouble maker, or to pick off someone who is isolated. When we see this happen there are several things we can do. Link arms to prevent the cops from getting at who they want, or 'unrarrst' the person by pulling them away from the filth. No matter what is done, make sure that there are enough people to pull it off, the last thing we need is for even more people to get busted. Look out for each other.

Decisions can be made on the spot as to routes and other actions involving everyone. It's not impossible to make a quick decision with everyone there and it's important to try to direct every action "from below" as was said before.

Whatever you choose to do, remember that it will affect the whole crowd. If you attack the cops, they may come down on everyone. If you do some sabotage then run back into the crowd, they may come after the whole bunch to get you. Police are indiscriminate and love to have excuses for violence. Be responsible to people there. It's not cool to get everyone's head kicked in or landed in jail just for one person's action. Use your head, there may be other ways.

Be on the lookout for undercover cops. They should be pointed out if you're sure you've got one, and expelled, photographed or dealt with in some way. Media people shouldn't be allowed to get too close to anything illegal or to take pictures. Also be aware of provocateurs who advocate suicidal actions and try to get someone else to do it (rather than doing themselves). It's hard to tell the difference between someone who's just over-excited and a provocateur but the key is to keep your wits about you and *think before acting*.

Above all, keep cool.

Become involved in prisoner solidarity after the fact if necessary. The struggle continues everyday and those who are picked off for being a part of the struggle and should be kept in mind.

General Security

Politically active individuals and organizations in Canada must expect to be victims of surveillance, disruption and attacks (legal and illegal) instigated by the state and/or political opponents.

There are many ways to deal with this problem. What follows is a brief survey of some areas of concern and some preventive measures, excerpted from information provided by the Law Union of Ontario. The legal information applies specifically to Canada only, but the general rules apply everywhere.

Telephones

The general rule: act as if the phone you are using is tapped.

Why the rule? Because:

- 1) If you are known to the police as an activist or someone who you openly associate with is known as an activist you are a candidate for a phone tap etc.
- 2) You cannot assume that your meek and mild friend, whose phone you are using, is not involved in something or does not have an open association with someone who is a "heavy".
- 3) Pay phones are also tapped (this fact is reported in the Ont. Gazette by the Attorney General in his yearly report). You can not assume that the pay phone you have chosen is not the one the police are tapping in order to get "Teddy the Torch" who uses it too and is not as cautious as you. The police solve many crimes by "accident" when they stumble across evidence while investigating something entirely different.

The Canadian Security "Intelligence" Service (CSIS) Act

Section 21 and other sections of this act allow for wiretaps where the director of CSIS or a person designated by the Solicitor General believe on "reasonable grounds" that someone is a "threat to the security of Canada". Also they do this to gather information and intelligence in relation to "the defense of Canada" or "foreign relations". This clause can obviously be interpreted to include almost any activity except bowling [unless you're the Revolutionary Anarchist Bowling League - ed]. It is this "Section 21" nonsense which provides the government and the secret police

(CSIS) with the legal cover for wiretapping any person or organization that they consider to be opposition.

Phone taps — only a fool or a hermit assumes her or his phone is not tapped.

Tracing calls

Yes they can do it without legal restrictions.

- long distance phone bills are checked to see who you have called, how often and when etc.
- equipment is attached which can identify the numbers being called and the time. "Pen Registers" or "touch tone decoders" can record the number called and the time.

Your House and Other Places

Surreptitious Entries

This is an important weapon in the police (or other enemies) arsenal. The Watergate boys called them "black bag

jobs". When you do it they call it Break and Enter with intent. The "intent" involved is the intent to commit some indictable offense once inside (often theft). The government of Canada and the Provincial Attorney Generals have bought the RCMP line that their break and enters are not criminal because they have no intention to commit an indictable offence once they have entered. They are just entering to look around.

Purpose of entries:

- (i) They do enter to look around: at you letters, documents, files, address books, weapons etc.
- (ii) They enter to plant bugs or remove them later.
- (iii) They enter to steal or destroy documents or to torch the place.
- (iv) They enter to plant documents or prohibited items.

Bugging Rooms

There are several methods. (i) concealed microphones installed in the location (ii) listening through walls, ceilings or floors from the adjoining property with special equipment. (iii) an informer carrying a "body pack"

— usually a microphone on location is powered by a source at the monitoring location. Thus the police (or whoever else is bugging you) need not re-enter except to remove the bug. A Radio Frequency intercept (R.F.) involves emplacement of a radio transmitter and attached microphone. The range is short but can be in-

Loose-talk costs lives

In taxis
On the phone
In clubs and bars
At football matches
At home with friends
Anywhere!

**Whatever you say—
say nothing**



creased with an amplifier. A direct wire intercept involves a microphone being placed and then wires from the microphone to the "listening post". Some companies advertise equipment that can pick up conversations by picking up vibrations from the windows. This equipment requires no entry.

Bugs can also be hidden in the heel of shoes, attache cases, tie clips etc.

Your Garbage

Yes, they look through your garbage too. Try burning the papers you don't want read. You can take your garbage elsewhere too.

Combatting the Problem

- Consider the advantages of living with others. It makes it hard for them to predict when the house will be empty, if you have enough people. But don't count on this.
- Keep sensitive material in locked containers. At least you know that it has been tampered with or taken away.
- Keep really sensitive materials in "safe houses".
- Duplicate documents that will be hard to replace and keep the copies in safe places.
- When choosing a home or office consider its merits with these problems in mind.

Automobiles

- Car licences are easily traced to the owner.
- Cars are sometimes bugged for sound. Don't assume that conversation in a car is safe.
- Cars are easily broken into. Master keys are available as well.
- Faulty equipment on cars provides the excuse for harassment and questioning.
- Unpaid traffic tickets lead to warrants which lead to arrests and sometimes at embarrassing moments.

Being Followed

The police (or others who follow use all sorts of cars and disguises). Don't assume that because one car has not been behind you all the way you are not being followed. Often several cars are used (and sometimes planes as well) with the aid of radio communication.

"Bumper Bleepers" are also used to follow cars (or bikes). A radio beam transmitter is attached to the car. This transmitter sends out a signal and the location of the

source is discovered with direction finding equipment.

Mail

The Post Office Act prohibits the reading of mail. However, the mails have



been illegally opened in Canada for years. The Customs Act also authorizes searches of the mail for smuggling at least according to a certain interpretation (that of the government).

Even without opening, a great deal can be learned from who you write to. The

government has been threatening legislation which would legalize the opening of mail in circumstances where it is now illegal.

Files

If you keep files consider making duplicates and keeping the copies in a second location. Locked files are safer of course.

Weigh the relative importance of writing down every history making decision you make against the importance of not providing the police with the evidence they need for the conspiracy trial.

Informers

You can assume that you know a few. The lesson to be drawn from the present state of the law is that you can not assume that because someone is encouraging criminal activity they are not a cop or that if they are a cop that this will somehow help you when you are on trial.

BE CAREFUL. GOOD LUCK.

The Death of John Wayne

Now available: a series of cassettes which among other things attempt to articulate the similarity of experience transplanted Africans and the original people of North America have faced from European settlers on this continent.

1) "The Death of John Wayne" Native poetry set to Reggae, electronic and traditional music. Featuring "Nicaragua: Another Vietnam" and "Dubwise for Kanak Women". \$6.

2) "The Secret War Against the Black Panthers and the Indian Movement in America" Wards Churchill comments on the FBI operations against the Panthers and the Indian movement set to music, improvised jazz from Ojibway drummer Chris Martin, and a musical collaboration highlighting the poetry of Lee Maracle, a Cree Indian, and the thoughts of Chuckie D from the rap group Public Enemy. \$6

3) "Theft of Paradise" pieces mainly centering around the invasion original peoples have had to face. Dub poetry from Macka B. & Jeannette Armstrong as well as No Means No, Rhythm Pigs and Rhythm Activism. \$5

4) "The Buffalo Cliff Collection" Bitting satirical reggae from the Art & Soul band comprised of Black, Native & White musicians. Includes speeches by Méis spokesperson Jim Sinclair set to reggae as well as the piece "Lubicon Lake" \$10.

5) "Wagon Burner Express" produced by Chris Martin and Pat Andrade, this cassette highlights the improvised jazz music of Chris Martin. Also featuring the poetry of Nómosa Xaba. Available for \$7 from Chris Martin 1330 King St. W., Toronto Ontario, Canada, M6K 1H2.

Except where noted, cassettes are available from Technawbe Sound, 720 Carson Road, Ottawa Ontario, Canada, K1H 0K3. Send cheque or money order, and enclose \$1 for postage.

Anti-Mass—Some Points on Anarchist Organisation

We often receive requests from people wishing to set up their own local group, but who have no experience in the field and little idea as to how best to go about organising a group, be it for research/propaganda or functional purposes. The following article will provide some basic ground rules on organisational procedure for libertarian collectives.

Primacy of the collective.

The small group is the coming together of people who feel the need for collectivity. Its function is often to break out of the mass - specifically from the isolation of daily life and the mass structure of the movement. The problem is that frequently the group cannot create an independent existence and an identity of its own because it continues to define itself negatively, i.e. in opposition. So long as its point of reference lies outside of it, the group's politics tend to be superimposed on it by events and crises.

The small group can be a stage in the development of the collective, if it develops a critique of the frustrations stemming from its external orientation. The formation of a collective begins when people not only have the same politics but agree on the methods of struggle.

Why should the collective be the primary form of organisation? The collective is an alternative to the existing structure of society. Changing social relations is a process rather than a product of revolution. In other words, you make the revolution by actually changing social relations. You must consciously create the contradictions in history.

It is imperative that any people who decide to create a collective know exactly who they are and what they are doing. That is why you must consider your collective as primary. Because, if you don't believe in the legitimacy of this form of organisation, you can't have a practical analysis of what is happening. Don't kid yourself. The struggle for the creation and survival of collectives at this moment of history is going to be very difficult.

The dominant issue will be how collectives can become part of history - how they can become a social force. There is no guarantee and we should promise no easy victories. The uniqueness of developing collectives is their definite break with all hierarchic forms of organisation and the reconstructing of a classless society.

The form of a collective is its practice. The collective is opposed to the mass. It contradicts the structure of the mass. The collective is anti-mass.

Size of the collective.

Most people cannot discuss intelligently the subject of size. There is an unspoken feeling either that the problem should not exist, or that it is beneath us to talk about it. Let's get it out in the open. Size is a question of politics and social relations, not administration. Do you wonder why the subject is shunted aside at large meetings? Because it fundamentally challenges the repressive nature of large organisations. Small groups that function as appendages to larger bodies will never really feel like small groups.

The collective should not be bigger than a band - no orchestras or chamber music, please. The basic idea is to reproduce the collective, not to expand it. The strength of a collective lies in its social organisation, not in its numbers. Once you think in terms of recruiting, you might as well join the army. The difference between expansion and reproduction is the difference between adding and multiplying. The first bases its strength on numbers and the second on relationships between people.

Why should there be a limit to size? Because we are neither supermen nor slaves. Beyond a certain point, the group becomes a meeting and before you know it you have to raise your hand to speak. The collective is a recognition of the practical limits of conversation. This simple fact is the basis for a new social experience. Relations of inequality can be seen more clearly within a collective and dealt with more effectively. A small group with a 'leader' is the nucleus of a class society. Small

size restricts the area which any single individual can dominate. This is true both internally and in relation to other groups.

Today, the mode of struggle requires a durable and resilient form of organisation which will enable us to cope with both the attrition of daily life and the likelihood of repression. Unless we can begin to solve problems at this level collectively, we are certainly not fit to create a new society. Contrary to what people are led to think, i.e. united we stand, united we fall, it will be harder to destroy a multitude of collectives than the largest organisations with centralised control.

Size is a key to security. But its real importance lies in the fact that the collective reproduces new social relations - the advantage being that the process can begin now.

The limitation on size raises a difficult problem. What do you say to someone who asks, 'Can I join your collective?' This question is ultimately at the root of much hostility (often unconscious) toward the collective form of organisation. You can separate size from the collective because it must be small in order to exist. The collective has a right to exclude individuals because it offers them the alternative of starting a new collective, i.e. sharing the responsibility for organisation. This is the basic answer to the above question.

Of course, people will put down the collective as being exclusive. That is not the point. The size of a collective is essentially a limitation on its authority. By contrast, large organisations, while having open membership, are exclusive in terms of who shapes the politics and actively participates in the structuring of activities. The choice is between joining the mass or creating the class. The revolutionary project is to do it yourself. Remember, Alexandra Kollontai warned in 1920, 'The essence of bureaucracy is when some third person decides your fate.'

Self-activity

Bad work habits and sloppy behaviour undermine any attempt to construct collectivity. Casual, sloppy behaviour means that we don't care deeply about what we are doing or who we are doing it with. This may come as a surprise to a lot of people. The fact remains: we talk revolution but act reactionary at elementary levels.

There are two basic things underlying these unfortunate circumstances: (1) people's idea of how something (like revolution) will happen shapes their work habits; (2) their class background gives them a casual view of politics.

A lot of problems which collectives will have can be traced to the work habits acquired in the (mass) movement. People perpetuate the passive roles they have become accustomed to in large meetings. The emphasis on mass participation means that all you have to do is show up. Rarely do people prepare themselves for a meeting, nor do they feel the need to. Often this situation does not become evident precisely because the few people who do work (those who run the meeting) create the illusion of group achievement.

Because people see themselves essentially as objects and not as subjects, political activity is defined as an event outside them and in the future. No one sees themselves making the revolution and, therefore, they don't understand how it will be accomplished.

The short span of attention is one tell-tale symptom of instant politics. The emphasis on responding to crisis seems to contract the span of attention - in fact there is often no time dimension at all. This timelessness is experienced as the syncopation of over-commitment. Many people say they will do things without really thinking out carefully whether they have the time to do them. Having time ultimately means defining what you really want to do. Over-commitment is when you want to do everything but end up doing nothing.

The numerous other symptoms of casual politics - lack of preparation, being late, getting bored at difficult moments, etc. - are all signs of a political attitude which is destructive to the collective. The important thing is recognising the existence of these problems and knowing what causes them. They are not personal problems but historically determined attitudes.

Preparation is another part of the process which creates continuity between meetings and ensures that our own thinking does not become part-time activity. It also combats the tendency to talk off the top of one's head and to pick ideas out of the air. Whenever meetings tend to be abstract and random it means the ideas put forward

are not connected by thought (i.e. analysis). There is seldom serious investigation behind what is being said.

What does it mean to prepare for a meeting? It means not coming empty-headed. Mao says, 'No investigation, no right to speak.' Assuming a group has decided what it wants to do, the first step is for everyone to investigate. This means taking the time to actually look into the matter, sort out the relevant materials and be able to make the accessible to everyone in the collective. The motive underlying all preparation should be the construction of a coherent analysis.

Self-activity is the reconstruction of the consciousness (wholeness) of one's individual life activity. The collective is what makes the reconstruction possible because it defines individuality not as a private experience but as a social relation. What is important to see is that work is the creating of conscious activity within the structure of the collective.

One of the best ways to discover and correct anti-work attitudes is through self-criticism. This provides an objective framework which allows people the space to be criticised and to be critical. Self-criticism is the opposite of self-consciousness because its aim is not to isolate you but to free repressed abilities. Self-criticism is a method for dealing with piggish behaviour and developing consciousness.

Suggested Reading:

MANUAL FOR ACTION, Martin Jelfs & Sandy Merrit, Action Resources Group, c/o 13 Mornington Grove, London E3 4NS, £2.90 (inc. p&p)

Invaluable collection of more than 130 techniques, "tools", exercises, games, etc., to encourage people to work and organise together more effectively. The MANUAL FOR ACTION is a resource book, not a textbook, so there is little analysis, only enough to help people to use the tools intelligently and effectively. Contents include: Action Not Words; Training For Action; Working Together; Individuals Within Groups; Sensitivity; Vision; Strategy; Tactics. This is a highly recommended resource book for everyone involved in movements for social and political change, and makes an ideal companion volume to the present work.